

## **Restoration of historic mill site to begin soon**

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After five years of roadblocks, a plan to restore the historic Keene's Mill foundation is moving forward.

In 2010, voters at the annual town meeting approved a proposal to spend \$30,000 in Community Preservation Act funds to restore the foundation of an old saw mill, located near the intersection of Temple and Keene Streets. The project consists of removing and resetting the granite blocks that have tumbled down into the nearby stream back into the foundation. In 2008, the town acquired the land containing the mill when it bought 97 acres near Camp Wing from Crossroads for Kids. According to Conservation Administrator Joe Grady, there were many delays in getting this project going but the major one was getting approval from the state's Office of Dam Safety. This agency ramped up its safety efforts in 2013 after severe flooding in parts of the state. To receive permission to work on the site, the town had to find and hire new engineers who could create drawings and specifications of the foundation. However, this was not easy. "We had difficulty designing the re-construction because we weren't sure what it looked like," Grady said. "It's been really slow," he added. "Many times people said we should give it up. But I said 'Let's try.' It's a really neat old mill." Armed with new plans, Grady on Tuesday went before the Conservation Commission to receive a permit to work in wetlands. Grady said the project consists of "pulling the pile of stones out of the stream and reassembling the walls of the foundation. Right now it's a jumbled pile of stones and we need to figure out what the design was."

When the project is put out to bid, Grady said he expects to see responses from companies that are involved in historical stone restorations.

"It's very specialized work," he said. According to Duxbury town historian Tony Kelso, there had been mill on that site dating back to 1706-1710.

"It was a a grist mill then it became a saw mill," he said.

The building housing the mill was probably rebuilt several times during the past two centuries. Kelso said the last documented mill owner was Isaac Keene, IV, who lived in the farmhouse at Camp Wing. He had what was known as an "up and down" sawmill. "He rebuilt the mill in the 1860s and used it for wood for buildings and for cranberry boxes," Kelso said. Keene died in the 1890s. Some parts of the mill were dismantled and sold and afterwards the rest of it fell into disrepair. A photograph dated 1912 in Norman Forgit's "Duxbury: An Album" shows the remnants of the mill and its machinery. Grady said the site is easily accessible from the road and when the work is complete, the area will show off a unique slice of Duxbury's past. "It's scenic and historic," he said.



**Tumbled down granite blocks will be reset into the foundation of the old mill.**

**A view of the foundation still standing from the historic Keene's Mill.**

